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NOTES AND HISTORIES

of

DALY CITY AND COLMA

by

Ann Kahle

William Preston

Robert S. Thornton

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Table of Contents

I. NOTES ON THE HISTORY OF COLMA
by Anne Kahle — Pages 1-15

II. THE HISTORY OF DALY CITY AND COLMA
by William Preston — Pages 16-29

III. REMINISCENCE - INTERESTING SKETCH
by Robert S. Thornton — Pages 30-34

Index — Pages 35-36

NOTES ON THE HISTORY OF COLMA

by

Anne Kahle

San Mateo Junior College

May, 1938

Sources of Information

Books,

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Stories of San Mateo County by Eleanor Freeman. San Francisco, 1938.

Newspapers,

Daily News, San Mateo, Cal.

The Daly City Record, Daly City, Cal.

North End Record, Colma, Cal.

Personal Interviews,

J.L. Brown, former publisher of the North End Record and Justice of the peace. Resident of Daly City from about 1908.

Mrs. J.T.Casey, widow of the County Supervisor who was known as "Good Roads Casey."

Mrs. D.F. Spellmann, daughter of Patrick Brooks, early settler near Colma.

Mrs. Henry Ward Brown, Widow of California Assemblyman and lawyer, raised in Pedro Valley, life-long resident of Colma region.

Mr. & Mrs. Wm. Kahle (my parents) residents of Colma since early childhood.

Joseph Millett, life-long resident of Colma, blessed with a remarkably accurate memory.

Mrs. Frank Kahle (Helena Jensen), the daughter of Mr. F. Jensen, once owner of the White House.

NOTES ON THE HISTORY OF COLMA

The Pioneers

The northern end of San Mateo County has a most interesting history, about which very little has been written.

The earliest settlers of Colma were known as homesteaders and settled here as early as 1853, on government land.[1] Some of their names are still familiar in this community such as: Commerford, Thornton, Pierce, Dunks, White, and Knowles. Descendants of this early Commerford now live in Pedro Valley; R. S. Thornton, was a familiar figure in Colma until well into the 20th century; Mrs. J. T. Casey, widow of "Good Roads Casey," who belonged to the second generation, still lives with her son in Colma. Others are remembered in the names of streets or other landmarks if not in person.

The first group of settlers composed of Jason White, Herman Dunks, Michael Commerford, J. E. King, and Millard Hollingsworth, had tried mining at "Camp Coloma" on the American River and did not do so well so decided to try farming instead.[2] They settled in this valley and are said to have named it "Coloma" after the place where they had been mining. Since this duplication of names was conflicting, so goes the story, "Coloma" was changed to "Colma". This is the nearest we can get to an explanation of the origin of the name of the town.

In those early days when ships had to go around the Horn, to get to the Pacific Coast, Mr. R. S. Thornton, who was 35 years of age and a blacksmith and carriage maker, arrived in California in 1852, and during the following year (1853),[3] settled on 160 acres of government

land located about 6 miles south of where the Cliff House now is located. Thornton's Beach was the west boundary of the Thornton Ranch. His ability to save money soon made it possible to acquire more land and before long he was the owner of more than 500 acres of the choicest land in the district. In 1868, he was elected the second supervisor and held office for 5 years. He was interested in all Democratic activities, contributed generously to benevolent organizations, and he assisted in the surveying of our district for the government and sectionized the land for the settlers. He lived here until his death at the age of nearly 100 years. He was survived by a daughter Mrs. Lindsay, and an only grandaughter Mrs. J. Greene, who until recently, lived in their old home on San Pedro Road and Junipero Serra Boulevard.

The settlers lived in happiness until 1859, when a gang of corporation engineers encroached on the rights of these settlers by pretending the land belonged to the Laguna de la Merced Rancho, which was at this time a worthless waste.[4] The land of the homesteaders was quite the contrary. It contained homes, with fences marking the boundary of each owner and fine crops on all the acreage.

The homesteaders all had patents to their lands from the United States Land Office, so a long legal battle resulted.

The settlers elected R. S. Thornton to tend to these affairs in Washington D. C.[5] He guarded their rights for six years until May 24, 1866, when he succeeded in establishing the settlers' claims to their lands.

"Patty" Brooks acquired a large acreage of the northern part of Buri Buri Rancho, and was a successful farmer.[6] Brooks together with Thornton raised potatoes and grain quite well. While Mr. Brooks drove his ox team to the San Francisco market his wife guarded their home very carefully against encroaching squatters and troublesome neighbors. One of his daughters, Mrs. D. F. Spellmann, resides in San Francisco with her daughter Evelyn, who is a school teacher.

Another familiar name of Colma was that of Casey. Mr. J. Casey, father of "Good Roads Casey", also acquired land (227 acres) on the Buri Buri Rancho.[7] He settled in 1851, about 4 miles from Colma. His son James, was born there in 1862. He was one of a family of sixteen children. When he was twenty years of age he ran for supervisor and was defeated, but in 1908, he again ran for this office and was the victor. He was known as "Good Roads Casey", due to the interest he took in the making of descent roads in this district. We are thankful to him for persuading the supervisors in Santa Clara and San Francisco Counties to become interested in a connecting link, namely El Camino Real, or "the doorway to San Francisco".

The Village of Colma

The school house, known as Old Jefferson Hall, which dated back to about 1856, was one of the first buildings of Colma.[8] It was because of this building that Colma was first known as Schoolhouse Station. Daily attendance at the school was small, nevertheless, there was a beginning of a town and a school. It stood where Jefferson Annex now is.

The property along San Pedro Road to Mission Street was surveyed and donated by Mr. H. Dunks to the county of San Mateo for school purposes.[9] Mr. F. Pierce, Mr. R. S. Thornton, and Mr. A. Ver Linden were the first trustees, and Mr. Blackburn the first teacher.[10] But in 1876, there were 40 students under the supervision of Etta M. Telton as teacher.

But in 1886, the school building proved too small so it was moved back, and an additional one room was built to front on San Pedro Ave.

On Feb. 15, 1886, the new bell for the Jefferson School was rung for the first time[11]---it was a credit to the district and also to the superintendent of construction, R. S. Thornton.

Holy Angels Church on San Pedro Road was originally known as St. Anne's Church, and was erected in 1867.[12] It was named in honor of Anne Dunks, whose father so kindly donated the land for both school and church. The parish extended from San Bruno to Ocean View. Father Dempsey, Fahlen and Bowman were the first three priests to officiate--- then later Father Cooper took it over.

During 1870-1872, Colma was being divided into "homestead" tracts.[13] Some of these were: Garden Valley Homestead, Castle Tract, Abbey Homestead, Concordia Park, Union Park, etc. Some of these subdivisions are still known by these names.

The first store of Colma was founded in 1861 by Mr. Hill,[14] where Belli's store is now. This store was known as "Hill's General Merchandise", but included in this was a bar.[15] In 1869, a post office was added and Mr. Hill was the postmaster. This post office was titled

"School House Station". In 1888, it was changed to "Colma Station", and in 1895 to "Colma".

The Railroad

The railroad was built through Colma in 1863 and the first train left San Francisco depot in October of that same year.[16] The stations on this line were, first 25th and Valencia, then Bernal, Ocean View (San Miguel), School House Station (Colma), Baden, San Bruno, Millbrae, etc. On these tracks all trains leaving San Francisco, for Los Angeles and other points, passed over this main line. But in 1914, the new line via Visitation was built, which runs along the bay shore, through several tunnels, and through South San Francisco.

Farming as a Whole

The farmers were very successful with their crops (mainly potatoes) and would haul them to San Francisco with ox teams. They would change their horses or oxen at Hill's store, and continue to San Francisco with a horse or two less and when returning they would rehitch and continue over the mountains to the adjoining valley.[17] The labor was done mostly by Chinese who were trustworthy and worked reasonably. The blight of 1871 to 1877 put an end to the profits of potatoe growing.

Later Colma

As years went by Colma became quite a town, and the people needed more stores to satisfy their wants. So on May 5th, 1867,[18] A. Husing established a "General Merchandise & Liquor Store", on the corner of

Market Street and Mission Road near Hill's place. A. Husing later went in partnership with Mr. F. Jensen. Later Mr. Jensen was sole owner. And then it was changed to the "White House", and behind the building there was a beautiful garden known as "White House Gardens".

The people of Colma were changing from farming to new phases of industry, for in 1871, the tannery business of Grady & Co. was first established.[19] Although they carried on with the general tanning business most of the time, they also had a speciality which was leather for book-binding. This tannery was located on a large piece of ground known as a part of the Abbey Homestead & Castle Tract. The company land was bounded by San Bruno Ave., Market St., and 3rd Ave. The tannery was surrounded by tall cypress trees.

The first Electric Railway made its appearance on May 4, 1892 along Mission Road, down to Colma[20] but later went down as far as Holy Cross.

When we pass Jefferson Union High School grounds and see many folks watching a very interesting football game, few of us know that on that very site there once was the Union Coursing Park (1898-1904).[21] This extended from School Street along Mission Road to Orange Ave. down to the railroad and along these tracks to School Street. This huge piece of property was surrounded by a seven-foot tight, board fence, also several rows of tall eucalyptus trees and cypress trees, these were used for wind breaks. At the corner of School St. & Railroad Ave. was a very large and attractive penant-bedecked grandstand. To reach this entrance you boarded another street car which extended

along School St. to the railroad tracks. During these races live rabbits were used for the dogs to chase. There were several other coursing tracks in this county but in 1904, a law was passed banning dog races and so all the excitement came to a sudden halt.

There was plenty of powder available in this town years ago, for the Du Pont Powder Co. had a storage magazine here, located on a block of land facing Castle Street, Abbey Ave., Price Street, and Wyoming Ave. The magazine was also highly boarded and three rows of trees disguised the place entirely. In the center was the brick building, usually filled to capacity with kegs of powder, and dynamite.[22] Mr. H. Marquardt was the man in charge, Mr. Phelps was the "boss" at the city office and my grandfather, Mr. H. Kluge, was night watch man. To enter this building, shoes had to be removed for fear the grit on the stone floors might cause an explosion. Also once stood a Fuse Factory on the site of the Mission Auto Courts today, but this factory was demolished by an explosion in 1898, in which several lives were lost.

Today we listen to prize fights and boxing matches over the radio but from 1901 to 1914, Colma was a prize-fight center.[23] Mr. Joe Millet ran a training quarters until 1914 when fighting was declared illegal. You would see strong, heavy fellows, strutting along Mission Street and down to the Post Office. They were the envy of every small boy. The fights would take place at the Arena built in 1903, in the White House Gardens or the larger one built in 1907, at the county line, on Sickles Ave. and Brunswick St.[24] Governor

Gilette stopped the fights, but allowed amateur four-round boxing matches, this was in 1914. On Oct. 13, 1908, Stanley Ketchel and Jack Johnson signed for a heavy-weight championship fight at the Colma Arena. The promotor was Jim Coffroth. The Papke-Kelly fight had every seat filled at the Colma Arena with fans, from all over the United States, here to witness a 45 round bout. But to the fans' great disappointment, Papke knocked out Kelly in the first round.

Most people of Colma were active in some sorts of amusements, because they would walk to the nearest show which was a nickelodeon on Broad Street in Ocean View.[25] If they didn't desire the walk they would wait for a street car. These cars ran about every 30 to 45 minutes. Cock fights also played a part in their amusement schedules.

Many folks living in this community, of Colma and its surrounding valleys, owe their lives to Dr. Mary Dangel, who resided on Sadowa Street in Ocean View.[26] She was a guardian angel if there ever was one. In many instances when her patients were under-going a crisis, she would stay at the home until all danger was past. She rode horse-back down to the Pedro Valley to attend her patients there and walked many miles in the surrounding districts. She had a strange motto: "Never send out bills, for if your conscience does not warn you to pay your doctor, a slip of paper most certainly will not." Another old familiar figure was that of "Morris the Peddler". He sold general merchandise, carried everything on his back, and visited each house.[27] When night fell upon him he would stay where he was peddling, for he was always

welcomed. He was known through the 60's and 70's and in latter years peddled jewelry to quite some extent.

The spirit of the old time was seen in the victory for $10,000 bond election for a Colma Lighting District.[28] The result for this election was the vote of 236 for and 2 against.

Mr. Henry Ward Brown was one of our most noticeable figures in the town's early history.[29] He served for many years as our Assembly man and practiced law here at his home on Dunk Street. His wife, Pauline, is the daughter of Mr. McCollough also very well known as an early settler of Pedro Valley. She is highly educated and is at this time teaching at the Jefferson Grammar School. Mrs. Brown took great interest in the youth of the community and started a Sunday School in 1900,[30] which was known as the "Protestant Sunday School". It was finally incorporated on July 27, 1907. Mr. Thornton donated the site for the church and the money for the building was secured by giving benefit plays and raffles, and by the donations. Alice Griswold was the first superintendent of the Sunday School. The building is now known as the Colma Community Center.[31] In this building the Colma Library is now located and the Boy's Club hold their meetings there. It is no longer a church, but yet it serves the youth of the district.

Daly City

Mr. John Daly was also one of the earliest settlers and came to the county in 1854,[32] while the Buri Buri Rancho was still controlled by Jose Sanchez. He worked on a ranch and saved enough money to start a small dairy on the site of the Millbrae Dairy. But later

had established a dairy from the county line to the "top of the Hill". He never lived in Daly City but was greatly interested in its growth and helped secure the extention of the five cent car fare from Sickles Ave. to the "top of the Hill (Daly City)" which was named in his honor.

On the morning of April 18, 1906 there occurred the greatest change that anyone could ever witness.[33] The earthquake of that morning and the fire following, sent thousands of wanderers out on the streets seeking safety from the conflagration which seemed to follow right along. Naturally the only escape was to get out of San Francisco as quickly as possible: and after miles of tramping these thousands of tired marchers finally reached the green sheltered fields of Daly's Ranch. Here they nestled under the tents which the Red Cross provided for shelter. Many did not return to San Francisco but preferred the quiet life in the country. The town thus began, grew rapidly and was incorporated on March 20, 1911, as Daly City.[34] The Daly City Record was moved up from Colma,[35] where it had been known as the North End Record, and had been established in Oct. 1908, by Mr. Pitsche.

One of the most prominent men of recent years in Colma was Mr. W. J. Savage.[36] He was principal of the Jefferson School for twenty years and in 1918 was made superintendent of the newly organized Jefferson District. He was born in San Francisco on Jan 1, 1867. His early years were spent on his father's farm at San Gregorio and he

finished his schooling at Half Moon Bay, where he passed the county examination and received his certificate for teaching in 1885. At the age of twenty, he became principal of the Menlo Park School. In 1919, the history entitled "Forward Looking Lessons in United States History", of which he was the author, was published and is still used in the public schools of California.

Jefferson Union High School was dedicated in May, 1925. It is a model example of what a school should be. Its principal, Mr. J. Ferguson and the Faculty are a credit to the community. The new gymnasium and swimming pool which have just been completed (April, 1938) would be a wonder to our pioneers, who settled here so early, and toiled the field from sun up until sun down, so that their children could later enjoy the better things of life. The coming generations have so many things to be thankful for as the pioneers who settled here had high ideals. They paved the way so carefully that their plans continue to grow, as the district increases it should become one of the most thriving communities in this section of the state; so praise these early settlers whose labor was not in vain.

The End

Foot Notes

1. Alexander & Hamm, 37
2. Daly City Record 10/12/34
3. Alexander & Hamm, 109
4. Ibid, 37
5. Idem
6. Mrs. Spellmann
7. Cloud, I, 278
8. Freeman; Mrs. Spellmann; Mrs. Casey
9. Mrs. Spellmann
10. 1878 Illustrated
11. Cloud, I, 456
12. Daly City Record 7/27/34
13. Mrs. Spellman
14. Mrs. Casey & Mrs. Spellmann
15. Daly City Record 10/12/34
16. Mrs. Spellmann
17. Mrs. Spellmann
18. Mrs. F. Kahle 1878 Illustrated
19. Mrs. W. Kahle; 1883-F.D. Alley
20. Mrs. F. Kahle
21. Daly City Record 7/27/34
22. Mrs. W. Kahle
23. Mr. Joe Millet
24. Daly City Record 7/27/34
25. Mrs. W. Kahle & Mrs. Casey

Foot Notes (Continued)

26. Mrs. W. Kahle

27. Mrs. Spellmann

28. Daly City Record 9/7/34

29. Ibid 11/30/34

30. Mrs. Brown

31. Idem

32. Daly City Record 1/5/23

33. San Francisco Examiner 5/13/06; Mrs. W. Kahle

34. Daly City Record 7/20/34

35. Idem

36. Cloud II, 446

THE HISTORY OF DALY CITY AND COLMA

by

William Preston

San Mateo Junior College

June 1, 1939

Sources of Information

Personal Interviews;

Mr. J. Dennis	Colma resident since 1898.
Mr. J. Hesselein	Colma and Daly City resident since 1904.
Mr. A. J. Green	Supervisor in Daly City in 1911.
Mrs. Ida Preston	Colma resident since 1904.

Books;

Daly City Commercial Directory. Daly City, 1939.

Roy W. Cloud, History of San Mateo County. 2 vols. Chicago, 1928.

Footnotes

1. J. Dennis
2. Ida Preston
3. A. J. Green
4. J. Hesselein
5. R. Cloud -- Vol. 1

In the short space of forty one years, Daly City has grown from a few people settled on scattered ranches into a community of twelve thousand people. In the year of 1898 there were very few people settled here, but it was these sturdy pioneers who made Daly City and Colma what it is today. Men like Mr. R. S. Thornton who fought for the farmers rights and who took an interest in the new land. "Sunny" Jim Coffroth who made Daly City the sport centre of the state of California. It was Mr. Coffroth who staged large boxing matches which made Daly City and the state of California the pugilistic centres of the nation. Located between Castle and Market streets and west of Mission Street was "Sunny" Jim's fighting arena which featured the second worlds championship fight lasting eighteen rounds of bare fists, between James W. Britt and Champion "Battler" Nelson. The match was won by "Jimmy" Britt in the eighteenth round.

A short street car line operated from Mission Street west on School Street to the race track located on the south west portion of the Union Coursing Park. Here people bet and witnessed dog races judged by a judge imported from England, named John Bull. Mr. Bull judged all races and his word was law. He was also permitted to judge the fights, and he had a practice ring of his own located in Colma where the Anchor Drug Store now stands. One of the best known training quarters for prize fighters was, Joe Millet's Training Quarters. This place was located in Colma west of Mission Street the same spot now being occupied by the Millet's Auto Courts or Camp Grounds.

A spot dear to all sport fans was Coakley's Night Club. It was located in the center of all activity and at the corner of Mission and School Streets, the place now occupied by the Flying A Serivce Station.[1]

Through Daly City and Colma runs the ancient mission trail, El Camino Real, the King's Highway. At first only a trail worn by bare feet of the Padres, and later by booth of gold-seekers. El Camino Real was long the main entrance to San Francisco. This road still remains and is still known as the Mission and the El Camino Real Roads. On Mission Road operated the United Railroad Car Company, now known as the Market Street Railway Company. This was the only means of transportation to San Francisco along Mission Street unless one had a horse and buggy.[2]

The only grocery store to serve the people in Colma and Daly City was Belli's Grocery Store, located in Colma. It still remains on the same location. Foreigners from Italy arriving at the Ferry in San Francisco often asked for direction to Belli's in Colma referring to it as their destination.[3]

Colma was very popular for saloons. Just north of the Anchor Drug Store was a saloon known as the White House and owned by Mr. James T. Casey. Mr. Casey was one of the County's first supervisors. Part of Mr. Casey's family still live in Colma. Diagonally across Mission Road from Casey's Saloon was another saloon owned by a Mr. Collopy. A large brown building now stands in its place, and is used as a Auto-hotel. Another saloon was operated by Mr. Ben Green. It was located almost opposit the Belli Grocery Store. A son of Mr.

Green and the grand-daughter of Mr. Thornton were united in marriage resulting in a very irritated grant-parent. Every one thought that the marriage would solve a long standing land feud between the two families, but it only made matters worse.[4]

In 1863 a railroad track was completed. The track ran along the western outskirts of Daly City and Colma, and operated between San Francisco and San Jose.[1]

Just north of the Union Coursing Park was located the Knowles Estate. This is now known as the Vista Grande District of Daly City. In the gulch now occupied by the Daly City Park Mr. Knowles had started a slaughter house which was never really finished. As Mr. Knowles became indebted to Mr. Marchbank it was necessary for him to hand this property over to Mr. Marchbank who in turn donated it to Daly City for recreational purposes.

Daly City was also the possessor of a fuse factory operated by Chinese, which was destroyed by fire in 1912. This factory was located just north of the Lorenz Auto Court on Mission Street.[3]

Colma's first school was erected in 1858.[5] Daly City and Colma now have five elementry schools and one high school.

Daly City's and Colma's first paper "The Colma Tattler" was started by Mr. Ben Silva in 1913. Its name was later changed to "The Colma Record" and now it is known as The Daly City Record. The graduating class of the Colma Grammer School were Mr. Silva's most ardent news scouts.[2]

Daly City came into its own in 1906, the year of the earth-quake and fire in San Francisco. After the disaster the people

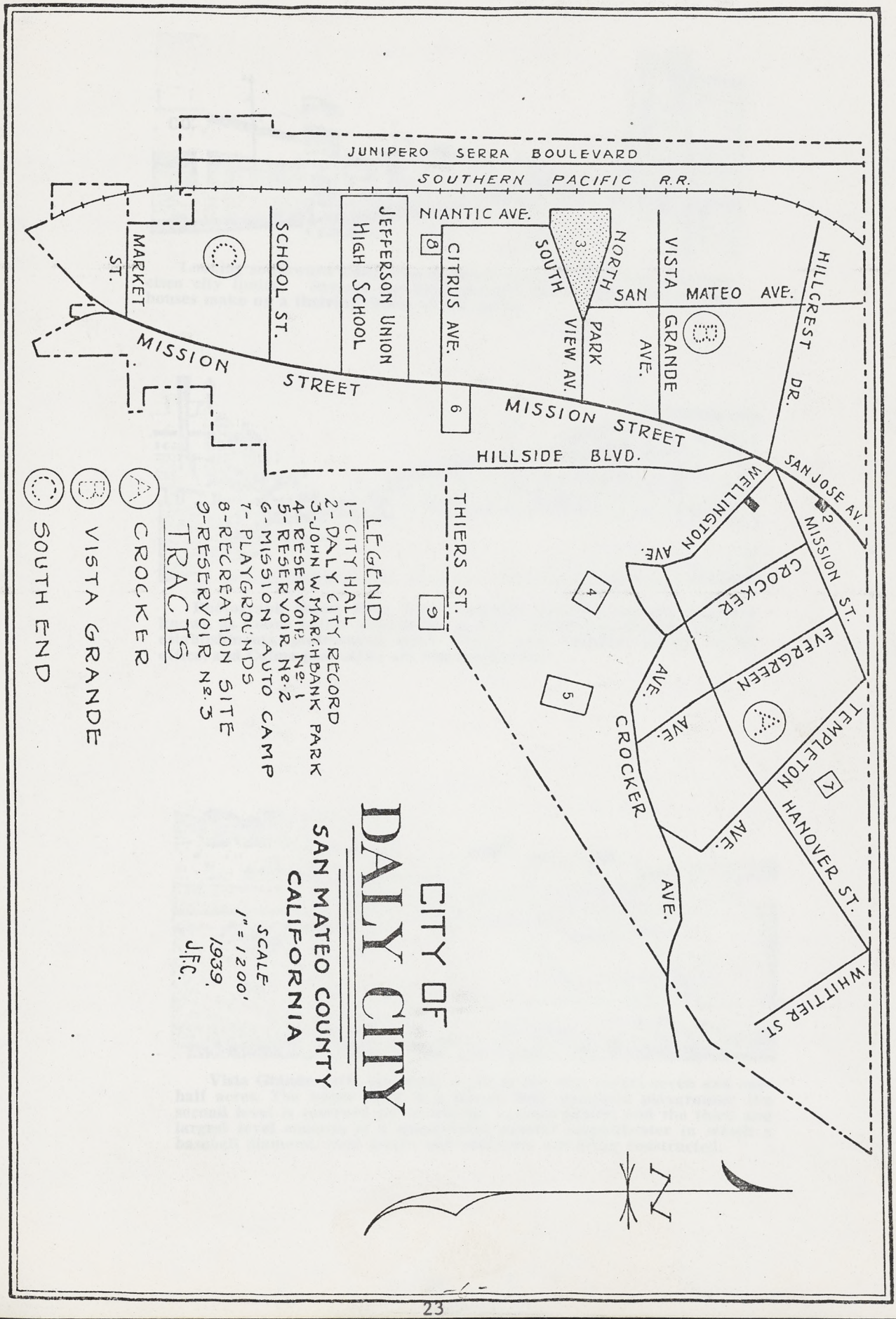
of San Francisco fled to the friendly green hills back of the city for safety. At the top of the hill then known as Daly's Hill army tents and soup kitchens were established for the emergency. Later refugee shacks were erected to house people for the winter which in many cases became people's permanent homes.[4]

In 1911 Daly City was a thriving little community and incorporated itself as a sixth class city. In 1914 a city hall was built which is being replaced by another in 1939. In 1913 the municipal water works was established providing its residents with the finest water in the state. Gas, telephones, light and transportation were extended from San Francisco.[4]

Today Daly City is a prosperous community with fine civic buildings, parks and lovely homes. Daly City has a progressive government., she has over 250 business establishments, a theatre, about 50 religious and social organizations, a library, and a news paper.

City limits have been extended three times in 1924, 1927 and in 1931. At present Daly City is one of the five largest municipalities in San Mateo County.[1]

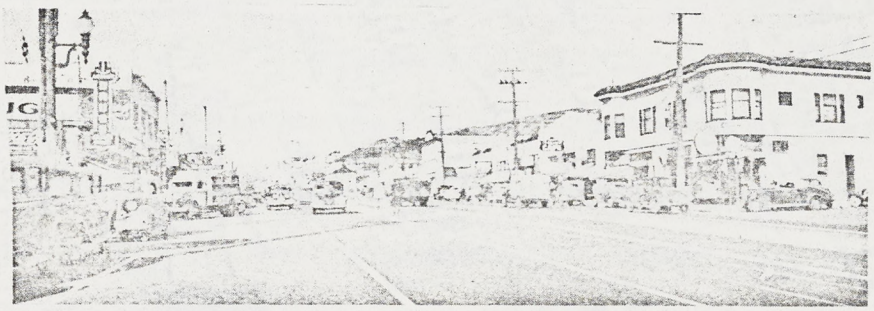
For Daly City the future holds many promises. The achievements of yesterday will serve only as an incentive for the still more splendid achievements of tomorrow.[2]


JUNIPERO SERRA BOULEVARD
SOUTHERN PACIFIC R.R.
NIANTIC AVE.
MARKET ST.
SCHOOL ST.
JEFFERSON UNION HIGH SCHOOL
CITRUS AVE.
SOUTH VIEW AV.
NORTH PARK AVE.
SAN MATEO AVE.
VISTA GRANDE
HILLCREST DR.
MISSION STREET
MISSION STREET
HILLSIDE BLVD.
SAN JOSE AV.
WELLINGTON AVE.
MISSION ST.
THIERS ST.
CROCKER AVE.
EVERGREEN AVE.
CROCKER AVE.
TEMPLETON AVE.
HANOVER ST.
WHITTIER ST.
LEGEND
1- CITY HALL
2- DALY CITY RECORD
3- JOHN W. MARCHBANK PARK
4- RESERVOIR No. 1
5- RESERVOIR No. 2
6- MISSION AUTO CAMP
7- PLAYGROUNDS
8- RECREATION SITE
9- RESERVOIR No. 3
TRACTS
A CROCKER
B VISTA GRANDE
SOUTH END
CITY OF
DALY CITY
SAN MATEO COUNTY
CALIFORNIA
SCALE
1" = 1200'
1939.
J.F.C.

From the Daly City

Commercial Directory

Looking southward along Mission street from the Daly City-San Francisco city limits. Several excellent grocery stores and other business houses make up a thriving center at this point.



Photograph shows Daly City's southern business section, formerly known as Colma before annexation in 1931. Large well-stocked business establishments, professional men's offices, auto agencies, county health office, and Colma post office are represented here.

Vista Grande park, originally a gift to the city, covers seven and one-half acres. The upper level is a paved, fully-equipped playground; the second level is reserved for courts for various games; and the third and largest level consists of a magnificent natural amphitheater in which a baseball diamond, field house, and bleachers are being constructed.

From the Daly City

Commercial Directory

(The following article was in William Preston's, The History of Daly City and Colma. The source is not given. The article is by Dale H. Fife and is entitled "The McLellans--Famous for Flowers".)

The story of the McLellans begins almost a century ago; 1851, to be exact, in Trinity Church, New York City, when David and Mary McLellan were married, then sailed for California, where nuggets "as big as your fist" could be picked up in the streets of San Francisco and every man was a millionaire.

The bride and groom traveled down the Atlantic Coast by sailing ship and crossed the Isthmus of Panama on Mule-back. The voyage up the Pacific was rigorous, for the rush to the gold country was so feverish every rotten hulk that could float had been pressed into service.

The trip took almost four months, but the pot of gold, alas, was not awaiting David McLellan when he set foot in the fabulous, reckless, gold-rush town.

This was the day when the "Native Son" wore a gay serape and sombrero; the "tourist" was garbed in red shirt and high boots, and the gambler was spotted by his white starched shirt and diamond studs.

David went by stagecoach to the Mother Lode country, but soon found that the revelry, the bedlam of greed and vice were no place for a bride. He returned to San Francisco and bought twenty acres of land in the sand dunes on the northern outskirts of the city and opened a fruit and vegetable stand. That fruit stand was located approximately where the Examiner Building now stands at the corner of Third and Market Streets.

This was the day of contrasts in San Francisco; the era of lynchings and church building; whiskey guzzling and dramatic reading of Shakespeare.

San Francisco's population was forty thousand.

Later, David traded his downtown property for a hundred acres on the Peninsula, in the district now known as Bay Meadows and extending over to the present Hillsdale property. He built a home, planted fruit trees, and grew grain. Here his twelve children were born.

Later, when Mary McLellan was left alone, faced with the care of a large family, she went to a neighbor, Antoine Borel, the banker. Mr. Borel admired Mrs. McLellan's courage. He lent her the money to start a dairy. This was the era of Ralston, Mills, Sharon, Flood, and Baldwin. Wealthy families were building baronial estates on the Peninsula. A dairy had every chance of success.

Of the McLellan children, the eleven-year-old Edgar was an incurable dreamer. While milking cows he dreamed of growing flowers. After working hours he took to visiting the great Peninsula mansions in their settings of gray-trunked eucalypti, live oak, and deodara. He made friends with the gardeners and learned their methods.

Edgar spent his spare time experimenting with hybrid plants. He built a small glass rouse to protect his rare flowers. In those days, a customer of the McLellan Dairy was apt to find a bunch of carnations or roses on the stoop with his milk.

The McLellans prospered. A delivery route was opened in San Francisco.

By this time Edgar was in his twenties, ambitious, hard working, shrewd. San Francisco had become a fabulous city of wealth, good living, fine food and wine. One of the luxuries the Belles and Swells demanded was flowers. Edgar McLellan saw his opportunity.

When in 1895 he married Mary, the daughter of William Thompson Garratt, they purchased seven acres in a colony established by the American diplomat, Anson Burlingame. Here Edgar developed his flowers for the market.

While on an eastern trip Edgar became interested in gardenias growing in conservatories. He brought cuttings back to the Coast and experimented with them. But it was a good many years before the exotic flower was to be grown commercially.

In the succeeding years Mary and Edgar had ten children.

Many of Edgar's ideas were held revolutionary. He shipped rare blooms in ice to the Atlantic Coast. In season, he shipped chrysanthemums daily to the East.

Edgar McLellan was a warm friend of Golden Gate Park's John McLaren, the young landscape gardener from Scotland who was to make the world famous.

At Edgar's suggestion, his sons, Wakeman and Roderick, who were not enthusiastic about the flower business, went to work in the McLellan wholesale floral market in San Francisco. Gradually they became interested in the gardenias their father had developed. They experimented with the waxy, fragile flower. They pampered it and evolved new ideas, among them the "Tailored" gardenia.

The word "Tailored" refers to ready-to-use gardenias--leaves are fastened to a collar which in turn is fastened with floral tape around and behind the bloom.

The first "Tailored" gardenia had leaves fastened to the collar with staples. During the war staples were hard to get. The E. W. McLellan Company devised the use of sewing machines (patented) to

do the work of the staples. The method proved so much more satisfactory that it has been adopted permanently. This entire process originated with the E. W. McLellan (Tailored gardenia).

REMINISCENCE

Interesting Sketch

by

Hon. R. S. Thornton

Daly City Record
Colma, California, 1913
Editor J. U. Brown

REMINISCENCE

Interesting Sketch by Hon. R. S. Thornton,
The Grand Old Pioneer of Colma Who is Hale
and Hearty at Ninety-Four

Colma, California - April 4, 1913
Editor J. U. Brown - Daly City Record

Dear Sir: Being invited by you to give a review of the surroundings of the Northwest corner of San Mateo county, in which Daly City and Colma are located, I will endeavor to comply with your request to the best of my ability.

This section is of much more consequence now than it used to be. In early days the people of the county seat called us "sand hillers" for short and we accepted the name but retaliated by dubbing our neighbors of the county seat the "mud stickers". But now they are out of the mud and we are out of the sand, so the terms have passed into history and the sand hillers and mud stickers are cemented in the bonds of close friendship.

This county was organized out of San Francisco county in 1856. San Franciscquito Creek was the southern boundary and on the west the Pacific Ocean and on the east San Francisco Bay.

After organization, the county was divided into three supervisor districts called townships. The first township extended from the San Francisco county line to Belmont. Halfmoon Bay comprised the second township and Redwood City was called the third.

I was elected supervisor of the first township in 1858 and under the law at that time one of the duties of a supervisor was to attend

to the roads and highways and trails. The only public county road in those days was the one leading from San Francisco to San Jose, now known as El Camino Real.

Although I assisted in making many roads and trails for the early settlers without county funds, my only recourse for revenue was that derived from the collection of a poll tax of four dollars assessed against every able bodied man.

My road district extended from the southern boundary of San Francisco to Belmont and west to the Pacific ocean, while the bay formed the eastern boundary. During my four years service as road master I encountered many obstacles which might be called rough in these days. I used to smile at the task as I filled up mudholes with willow brush and took rails from settlers' fences to pry stages out of the mire.

Taxation was light in those days and property cheap. There were very few people to pay taxes then, as the land was owned in the big tracts and a few owned it all. The holdings are smaller now and there are more people to pay taxes, hence the rate is lower and a special tax for good roads should come easy.

Many non-resident people owning lands in this county will pay more taxes than those who reside here, hence the resident voters of our county should vote for bonds to build good roads. The big land holders of our county are for the road bond issue and I wish to state to our voters, if there are any who are skeptical, about how the bond funds will be expended. This is a matter governed by strict law. The Board of Supervisors, assisted by a commission, will see

that every contractor who has a contract to do work on the roads, is made to do his work right or forfeit his pay. The Auditor of our county will put a stop to a void contract and our Board of Supervisors are honorable men and will soon put a bad contractor up a spout where he can't collect the money on bad work. We all have to trust each other and confidence in our county officials is a great thing to assist them in doing the lawful business of the people.

In my second year as supervisor and ex-officio road master (1859) our board under the law could raise money for a road fund, so we levied a tax of eighteen hundred (1800) dollars for the three road districts. At this time Joseph Ames was elected supervisor from Halfmoon Bay, and Mr. Diller, who was chairman of the board, inquired what we should do with the money.

Ames said "Mr. Chairman, I make the motion to third it."

I answered " I concur on that motion," which was carried and gave to each supervisor $600 for road work.

I laid out mine in the sand hills from where Collopy's saloon then stood, to the north side of I. G. Knowles' land, which is now Daly City.

That little money relieved us very much. Although it could not be called a conscience hob, every year I put the greater part of my money into the sand hills until my road was out of mudholes and our present supervisor has made our old county road a grand highway, but he had a little more than $600 to do it with and he has fixed the coast roads better than any supervisor before him.

But what has been done is not sufficient for a first-class road, therefore if our good resident people will vote the bonds we will have some good roads.

There is some little jealousy existing among the people, some of whom are imbued with the idea that this road bond issue is solely for the benefit of automobilists. That is a wrong impression, for when the roads are completed they will be for the use of all classes of vehicles that choose to use them. The automobiles are here for good and we should not borrow trouble about them. America always adopts the ingenuity of science and the ingenuity of our citizens is protected by our patent laws.

With due respect for the good citizens of San Mateo county, I hope you will back up the bond issue for good roads.

Respectfully,

R. S. Thornton

INDEX

Abbey Homestead, 6, 8
American River, 3
Ames, Joseph, 33
Anchor Drug Store, 19
Baldwin, 27
Bay Meadows, 27
Belli's Grocery Store, 20
Blackburn, Mr., 6
Borel, Antoine, 27
Bowman, Father, 6
Boy's Club, 11
Britt, James W. ("Jimmy"), 19
Brooks, Patrick ("Patty"), 5
Brown, Henry Ward, 11
Brown, Margaret Pauline (also Pauline Brown or Mrs. Henry Ward Brown), 11
Bull, John, 19
Buri Buri Rancho, 5, 11
Burlingame, Anson, 28
Camp Coloma, 3
Casey, James, 5
Casey, James T. ("Good Roads Casey"), 3, 5, 20
Casey, Mrs. James T., 3
Casey's Saloon, 20
Castle Tract, 6, 8
Cliff House, 4
Coakley's Night Club, 20
Coffroth, James J. ("Sunny Jim"), 10, 19
Collopy, George M., 20
Collopy's Saloon, 33
Colma Arean (Colma Fight Arena), 9, 10
Colma Community Center, 11
Colma Grammar School, 21
Colma Library, 11
Colma Lighting District, 11
Colma Record, 21
Colma Station, 6, 7
Colma Tattler, 21
Comerford, Michael (Commerford), 3
Concordia Park, 6
Cooper, Father, 6
Daly City Park, 21
Daly City Record, 12, 21
Daly, John D., 11, 12
Daly's Hill, 22
Daly's Ranch, 12
Dangel, Mary, 10
Dempsey, D. F., 6
Diller, Mr., 33
Dunks, Ann, 6
Dunks, Herman, 3, 6
DuPont Powder Co., 9
Electric Railway, 8, 9
Examiner Building, 26
Fahlen, Father, 6
Ferguson, James, 13
Flood, 27
Garden Valley Homestead, 6
Garratt, Mary, 28
Garratt, William Thompson, 28
General Merchandise and Liquor Store, 7, 8
Gillette, Governor, 9, 10
Golden Gate Park, 28
Grady and Company, 8
Green, Ben, 20, 21
Greene, Mrs. J., 4
Griswold, Alice, 11
Hill, Joseph J., 6
Hill's General Merchandise (Hill's Place, or Hill's Store), 6, 7, 8
Hollingsworth, Millard, 3
Holy Angel's Church, 6
Holy Cross Cemetery, 8
Husing, A., 7, 8
Isthmus of Panama, 26
Jefferson Annex, 5
Jefferson District, 12
Jefferson Grammar School, 11
Jefferson School, 6, 12
Jefferson Union High School, 8, 13
Jensen, Hans Frederick, 8
Johnson, Jack, 10
Ketchel, Stanley, 10
King, J. E., 3
King's Highway (El Camino Real), 20
Kluge, H., 9
Knowles Estate, 21
Knowles, Israel G., 3, 21, 33
Laguna de la Merced Rancho, 4
Lindsay, Mrs., 4
Lorenz Auto Court, 21
McCollough, Mr., 11
McLaren, John, 28
McLellan Dairy, 27
McLellan, David, 26, 27

INDEX

McLellan, E. W., Company, 28
McLellan, Edgar, 27, 28, 29
McLellan, Mary, 26, 27
McLellan, Roderick, 28
McLellan, Wakeman, 28
Marchbank, John, 21
Market Street Railway Company, 20
Marquardt, H., 9
Menlo Park School, 13
Millbrae Dairy, 11
Millet, Joe, 9
Millet's Auto Courts (Millet's Camp Grounds), 19
Millet's Training Quarters, 9, 19
Mission Auto Courts, 9
Morris, the Peddler, 10, 11
Nelson, Champion "Battler", 19
North End Record, 12
Papke-Kelly Fight, 10
Pedro Valley, 3, 10, 11
Phelps, Mr., 9
Pierce, Fred E., 3, 6
Pitsche, Mr., 12
Protestant Sunday School, 11
Ralston, 27
Red Cross, 12
Saint Ann's Church, 6
Sanchez, Joe, 11
San Francisco Earthquake and Fire, 12, 21, 22
San Francisquito Creek, 28
Savage, William J., 12, 13
School House Station, 5, 6, 7
Sharon, 27
Silva, Ben, 21
Spellman, Mrs. D. F., 5
Spellman, Evelyn, 5
Telton, Etta M., 6
Thornton, Robert S., 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, 19, 21, 31, 32, 33, 34
Thornton Beach, 4
Thornton Ranch, 4
Top of the Hill, 12
Union Coursing Park (Union Park), 6, 8, 19, 21
Union Tract, 19, 21
United Railroad Car Company, 20
United States Land Office, 4
VerLinden, Adolph E., 6
Vista Grande District of Daly City, 21
White House, 20
White House Gardens, 8, 9
White, Jason, 3

10
984

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